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SUBJECT: CONTROVERSIAL UNIVERSITY REORGANIZATION LAW PASSED

1. THE SPO'S UNIVERSITY REORGANIZATION LAW PASSED BY
PARLIAMENT APRIL 11. THE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE WAS UNDER PARTY
DISCIPLINE AND ALL OPPOSITION PARTY MEMBERS VOTED AGAINST THE LAW.

2. THIS REORGANIZATION CALLS FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN AUSTRIA'S HIGHER
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A) A UNIVERSITY DIRECTOR WILL BE APPOINTED TO
EACH UNIVERSITY AS THE TOP ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL OFFICER.
HE WILL BE ON THE SAME LEVEL AS THE UNIVERSITY RECTOR BUT WILL BE
RESPONSIBLE TO THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH; B) ALL
INSTITUTES AND PROFESSORIAL CHAIRS IN ANY ONE MAJOR FIELD WILL BE
MERGED INTO ONE LARGE INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTITUTE UNDER A DIRECTOR
WHO WILL BE ELECTED FOR TWO YEARS BY AND RESPONSIBLE TO A
"CONFERENCE BOARD" CONSISTING OF FULL PROFESSORS, ASSISTANT
PROFESSORS AND INSTRUCTORS, AND STUDENTS, EACH WITH ONE-THIRD
REPRESENTATION; C) ALL INSTITUTE AND DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARIES TO BE
MERGED INTO ONE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE MINISTRY.

3. COMMENT: MANY FULL PROFESSORS AND DEPARTMENTAL CHAIRMEN
HERE HAVE FOR LONG PLAYED THE ROLE OF PETTY DICTATORS IN BOTH
ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS. IN THAT SENSE THEY HAVE
BEEN ASKING FOR TROUBLE FOR A LONG TIME. HOWEVER, THE YOUNGER
GENERATION OF FULL PROFESSORS, MANY OF WHOM ARE WELL-KNOWN TO US

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AND HAVE STUDIED IN THE U.S., HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO MODERNIZE AND
LIBERALIZE THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT BOTH IN VIENNA AND ELSEWHERE

IN AUSTRIA. THIS NEW LAW, WHICH HAS BEEN PUSHED BY THE SOCIALISTS UNDER THE BANNER OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILTiy, APPEARS TO BE MORE OF AN IDEOLOGICAL THAN A PRAGMATIC GOAL OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY LEADERSHIP. ONE ELEMENT OF THIS IS, WE THINK, THE SPO'S BELIEF THAT THE NEW LAW WILL SERVE TO SHARPLY RESTRICT WHAT IT CONCEIVES OF AS BEING THE CONSERVATIVE'S POWER OVER HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THROUGHOUT AUSTRIA. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE NEW LAW IS AN IDEOLOGICAL PARALLEL TO THE BROADCASTING REFORM ACT WHICH WAS PASSED LAST YEAR. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ARE RATHER PASSIVE ABOUT THE NEW LAW, WHILE THE ASSISTANT PROFESSORS AND INSTRUCTORS ARE ABOUT SIXTY-FORTY IN FAVOR. THE FULL PROFESSORS ARE UNANIMOUSLY OPPOSED. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE VIENNA UNIVERSITY RECTOR HAS INFORMED US THAT ALL OF THE UNIVERSITY RECTORS IN AUSTRIA AGREED AT A RECENT MEETING TO RESIGN FROM THEIR POSTS IF THIS LAW WERE PASSED. MANY UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS HAVE ALSO THREATENED TO RESIGN OR OPT FOR EARLY RETIREMENT. IN THEIR VIEW THIS NEW LAW WILL MEAN THAT AUSTRIAN UNIVERSITIES WILL SUFFER FROM THE SAME DISORGANIZATION AND CONFLICT WHICH MANY GERMAN UNIVERSITIES HAVE EXPERIENCED DURING RECENT YEARS. BUCHANAN

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